1412
42
5
py 1

THE

MARVELLOUS

IN

Modern Times,

BY

LEWIS H. STEINER, M. D.

CHAMBERSBURG, PA:
M. KIEFFER & CO'S. CALORIC PRINTING PRESS.
1860.

THE

MARVELLOUS

IN

Modern Times,

BY

LEWIS H. STEINER, M. D.

CHAMBERSBURG, PA:
M. KIEFFER & CO'S. CALORIC PRINTING PRESS.
1860.

BF1412
.F42S75

28
S632

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS

Histoire du Merveilleux dans les Temps Modernes, par Louis Figuier. Tome premier (Les Diables de Loudun, Les Convulsionaires Jansenistes),—Tome deuxieme (La Baguette divinatoire, Les Prophetes protestants).

We are not of those who reject every marvel simply because it seems to have occurred in direct contravention of the laws of nature. There is really an extreme of incredulity as well as of credulity in the world,—one manifested by those who reject every thing they cannot understand, and the other by those who hail with delight all that is mysterious and obscure, reject the proper modes of testing its claims on our belief, and live a life of servile dependence on the creations of their own or their neighbor's fancies. There is a singular fact, connected with these extremes, illustrating the old proverb "that extremes meet,"—a spirit of irreligion, or rather a want of true religious faith, seems to pervade both the extremely credulous and the willfully incredulous. Thus we find these two classes rarely properly represented among humble, faithful, God-fearing Christians. These are willing to recognize the wonders of an Almighty hand in the pages of history, whether blood-stained by the records of battles or adorned with the triumphs of inventive peace,—those dispute the existence of every thing that is not plainly the result of known physical laws: or these reject all demonstrations of natural phenomena which are claimed to be produced by spiritual means as lying wonders calculated to bewilder the mind and lead the soul from the wholesome ways of truth,—while those, too proud to be humble Christians, and anxious for some new revelation, hail all the miserable tricks of charlatans as so many indications of spiritual communication and interference, and allow themselves to be blinded by their conceit until all the security, afforded by the sheet-anchors of reason and faith, being lost, they drift out into the illimitable ocean of ignorance and superstition.

The Christian does not feel himself obliged to believe every thing his senses report to his brain, if such reports involve a contradiction of the laws of nature, and are manifestly not intended to communicate any great fact or wondrous message from the Creator; and, on the other hand, he does not feel called upon to explain the cause—the trickery it may be—of the mysterious phenomenon. Where pretended revelations from the spiritual world attack the truth of Holy Scripture, the teachings of the Church, and the experience of the saints of all ages, it is a matter of small importance, whether the Devil and his wicked spirits be considered *mediately* or *immediately* concerned. It is not worth the time consumed in the discussion, to determine whether the powers of the lower world have acted upon the hearts of men so as to make them conscious deceivers of their fellow men. The main point for the Christian to keep in view, in these cases, is, that, whatever attacks directly a part of his Christian faith, must be thrust aside as dangerous and even deadly in its tendency. If he do this, he may be called illiberal, unprogressive and superstitious, but he will keep in the true path and will be justly entitled to none of these stigmas.

On the other hand, it is not unchristian to believe in "the continuance of apostolic gifts." Dr. Bushnell has well said,* on this subject, "there are yet, in every age, great numbers of godly souls, and especially in the lower ranges of life, to whom the conventionalities of opinion are nothing, and the walk with God every thing, who dare to claim an open state with Him; to pray with the same expectation, and to speak of faith in the same manner, as if they had lived in the apostolic times. And they are not the noisy, violent class, who delight in the bodily exercises that profit little, mistaking the fumes of passion for the revelations of God, but they are, for the most part, such as walk in silence, and dwell in the shades of obscurity."

Via media is always the most difficult path to discover,

*Nature and Supernatural, 490.

but it is the safest, nay the only safe path for the traveller. No labor, or care, is too great which may lead to its discovery. We must steer clear from those who solely believe in the every day natural phenomena of life, as well as those who delight in the glitter of novelties. Both will have a host of followers. Mankind is not only prone to disbelief, but also paradoxical as it may seem, to adopt novelties.

> "Whate'er absurdity the brains
> May hatch, yet it ne'er wants wet-nurses to suckle it:
> Or dry ones, like a hen, to take the pains
> To lead the nudity abroad, and chuckle it;
> No whim so stupid but some fool will buckle it
> To jingle bell-like on his empty head;
> No mental mud—but some will knead and knuckle it,
> And fancy they are making fancy bread."

The History of the Marvellous in Modern Times is fraught with interest to the student. It shows how prone man is to run after novelties, to desert old paths, and how epidemic the belief in wonders may be at certain periods in the world's history. Whole countries have been over run with strange delusions seizing the wisest as well as the most ignorant, and fanaticism, laughing reason to scorn, has reigned triumphant over all. To collect clear and impartial accounts of some of these in modern times has been the self-consigned task of the sprightly Figuier, and two volumes have already appeared as the half of his contribution to the literature of this subject. He promises additional volumes on *Animal Magnetism*, *Table-rappings* and quasi-*Spiritual communications*. We doubt whether the world is yet prepared to discuss these, but when his volumes appear, if other engagements do not claim our pen, we hope to make them subjects of other papers for the consideration of the readers of the Review. For the present, we purpose noticing the two volumes, which have already appeared, full of much that is interesting, novel and instructive to those who will tear off the covering to read the concealed moral. The past is pregnant with that which may be made instructive to the present, if we will but labor to understand it.

Figuier, looking upon the pretended marvellous manifes-

tations of the present as the necessary and almost inevitable development of similar phenomena in past ages, is somewhat skeptical, but his facts are always reliable. He considers that " the marvellous is food so necessary to the human mind, that, among all people and in all ages, there has existed a belief in extraordinary things and an admission of the existence of supernal facts. The harmony of the phenomena of the world, the order of nature and the constant regularity with which its laws are exhibited, can not satisfy this passion for wonder." The priests of India,—the brahmins of the first rank—proceeding from the brain of Brahma, were supposed to be the proper *media* for the communications of man with the divinity. Zoroaster formed the spiritual and material world out of an universal fluid, which was the actual substance of divinity. From this, it was an easy matter, to form minor deities and to create prodigies. The Pythoness, seated on the tripod, inhaling exhalations from the earth, fell into convulsions and uttered words which were interpreted by her attendants as prophetic communications. The pages of classic history are full of wonders of this kind, showing that the Greeks and Romans were ever ready to believe in something higher and more powerful than the merely human. As we approach the Christian Era the curious legend of Epithases meets our eyes; while becalmed near the isles of the Ægean Sea, a mysterious voice calls on Thamas, the pilot, and orders him to cry out with a loud voice, when the vessel should arrive at a certain position, that *great Pan was dead.* Thamas having obeyed this order, the air was filled with groanings and lamentations. Whether this is entitled to credence, or is merely a poetic mode of expressing the opening of the period when the overthrow of paganism was to be accomplished, and the reign of true miracles was to be established,—it is foreign from our design to discuss now.

Shortly after the beginning of the Christian Era, prodigies are attributed to the wonderful supernatural power of magicians and soothsayers, which far exceed those said to

have been produced in the more distinctly pagan days of Roman history. Simon of Samaria was thought, by the enemies of the Christians, to be the special envoy of the ancient divinities with full authority to demonstrate their powers and might,—by the Christians he was considered as being favored by demoniacal aid. All his acts, seen through the dim corridors of the past, assume a miraculous character. He is said to have created statues that moved boldly before wondering crowds, and to have remained sound and uninjured amid the flames of a funeral pile. Contemporaneous with this juggler, was Apollonius of Thyanes, who lived to the age of one hundred and thirty years. He possessed the power of transporting himself at will from one place to another, of converting himself into various objects like the fabled Proteus, and of evoking "spirits from the vasty deep." At Ephesus, when the plague was depopulating the city, he attributed the cause to an evil spirit they were harboring within the walls. An old beggar was seized upon as this evil spirit. Being stoned to death, instead of the body of a man a carcass of a dog was found, which being interred the plague ceased. In these days sorcerers and magicians became so numerous that "the poets complain of them as a scourge, and edicts of expulsion were issued on several occasions by the emperors." Tacitus relates that the opportunity was also employed to rid the city, at the same time, of the philosophers.

They were followed by men who worked in accordance with their formulae, but without a tithe of their talents or skill. The very edicts of banishment gained them partisans. Mankind is always disposed to array itself on the side of the apparently persecuted. Christian rites and ceremonies, not understood, were mingled with pagan ceremonies, and a mongrel magical art was the result which increased with the lapse of time, till saints, angels and archangels were invoked to aid in the most questionable investigations and pursuits. The psalms were employed as an important part of the ritual of the magicians. The

disease gained its height in the middle ages, and we turn over the pages, written by its followers, with an astonishment that knows not whether to express itself in smiles or tears. A collection of forty chief treatises, on Magic and allied subjects, written in the middle ages and published under the title of *Schätze aus Kloster-Bibliotheken*, has come into our possession, and we think it incomparably the greatest farrago of nonsense we have ever met. Hebrew, Chaldaic and meaningless words are strung together, like beads on a string,—and supposed, when cited in due order, to be all powerful in bringing forth familiar spirits.*

But we cannot follow the history of magic with any closeness,—the whims, conceits, follies and supposed demoniac possessions of ages nearer the present demand our attention. Demoniacal possession being a fact in the early portion of the Christian era, when the period of division and schism had arrived, this charge proved a powerful weapon in the fratricidal wars that were constantly taking place. The Church distinguished between those who had voluntarily signed the contract with the Evil One, and those who were affected through the vile arts of sorcery. It was supposed there were those, like Faust, who would peril their soul's salvation for the power of commanding the powers of the earth, air and sea. These were subjected to death in all the forms that an ingenious cruelty could command. The Church had a special rite for exor-

*A spirit is thus invoked, who was supposed to have charge of hidden treasure: Audi, audi spiritus obstinax, qui Thesaurum sub hac terra, unde ista portio desumpta est, latentem custodis, aut possides. Adonay, Sabbaoth, Cadas, adonay, ammara, alli, adoy, Sabbaoth, ammara, collniziara, offina, altennedera, fuffa, Menfent, Bengraf, hamasixin, ula, ula, coraf. Jasuren, omasixel, schani, eissoas, leroas, Hasiedin, ha siedin omdin, lafonaff, Kaslah, laugna, bosuras, chaphirh, chaphirach, hami, Kopa, heogunh, Scheuschen, togas, togos, hage, Phanim, debugim, menaihuh, menaihuch, Schegamhim, &c., &c., &., &c. Veni, compare, et affer statim Thesaurum petitum modo hbi, tuisque praescripto hic loci, et satisfac petitioni meae in omnibus ad amussim ocyus. Letamnim, letaglogo, letasynin, tebaganaritin, letarminim, letagelogin, letafalosin, Amen. Will the reader only think of 718 pages *done up* in that style!

Schätze aus Kloster-bibliotheken, 548.

cising a demon who had become incarnate in the body of a man. After mass, the person, having previously fasted, the demon was ordered to make a certain sign in the name of Christ. If this was made, the fact of possession was established, and the rites of exorcism were proceeded with.

In 1436, in the environs of Berne and Lausanne, a class of men arose who devoured human flesh, even eating their own children, pretending that these foul deeds were done in accordance with the command of Satan. Hundreds of individuals, suspected of these crimes were exposed to torture and acknowledged them.* In 1459 the mania of sorcery seized Artois, and those apprehended by the ecclesiastical authorities admitted attendance on nocturnal meetings, where the filthiest orgies were performed. In 1484, Innocent VIII. issued a bull against those who practiced the arts of sorcery in the regions of Cologne, Mayence, Treves and Salzburg. Among those arrested in this region many confessed the crime of anthropophagy, being impelled thereto by "*un instinct diabolique.*" One *sage-femme*, who was burned at Dann, in the diocese of Basle, confessed that she had destroyed more than forty infants. It is a question whether any of the accused were *really* guilty of anthropophagy, or had merely pretended the performance of the act, under the influence of an epidemic mania.

In the Sixteenth century, the juridical horrors were the same as in the Fifteenth. Over thirty thousand victims were made to suffer for the crime of heresy in the reign of Philip II. of Spain, and many were burned alive at Calahorra, being accused of sorcery. In Italy appeared the *Stryges*, sorceresses, who claimed that, by mentally invoking the power of a demon and by virtue of some sacramen-

* J'ai appartenu, disait l'un d' eux, ainsi que ma femme, à la corporation des sorciers ; j'ai renoncé aux grâces du baptême, à la foi chrétienne, à l'adoration du Christ. J'ai pris l'engagement de fléchir le genou devant le maître de l'enfer ; j'ai bu du suc extrait de la chair d'enfant, suc que les adorateurs de Satan conservent précieusement dans des outres ; ce breuvage procure un savoir qui n'appartient qu'aux initiés.

tal words, they could transform themselves into cats. In the shape of the latter they pretended that they could enter, through windows and other openings, rooms where infants were exposed, and then extract their blood through punctures made for the purpose. In 1521, Zoanthropia assumed another form in the mountains of the Jura. It was pretended that men assumed the form of wolves, and devoured women and little children. Three men, Pierre Burgot, Michel Verdung and Philibert Montôt, charged with being were-wolves (*loups-garous*), were burned alive, and their portraits were suspended in the church at Poligny. In 1522, the convents of Holland, Germany and Italy became objects of attraction from the singular forms which hysteria assumed in the nuns. Exorcisms were resorted to, and where these would not quiet the nervous irregularities, severer penalties were adopted. From many of the symptoms reported we can have no difficulty in guessing at the cause of the hysteria, but medical disquisitions are prohibited in the pages of the Review.

The mother of the great Kepler was charged with the practice of magic and barely escaped being burned alive. Her son deemed it his duty to protect his mother from the charge, although he did not deny the reality and power of sorcery. Indeed the seventeenth century abounded in instances of men and women, who were subjected to severe tortures, and even death, on account of complicity with the powers of the lower regions. Fire was the catholicon supposed to be alone efficient in such dire cases, and its purifying agency was invoked in the most absolute way imaginable.

Figuier gives, at full length, an account of the *demonmania* which prevailed, about the year 1632, in an Ursuline Convent, composed of the daughters of the nobility and established at Loudun, a little village in the diocese of Poitiers. At first, the nuns were said to leave their beds at nights, and to crawl over the roofs as somnambulists, thence descending to the chambers of the boarders. Complaint was made that they were beset by spectres at night,

and that blows had been received, the marks of which remained. The priest, attached to the establishment, Mignon, concluded that the symptoms justified the idea of *possession diabolique*. The advice of a neighboring priest, who was continually employed in hunting out demoniacs, being obtained, he began to exorcise the superior and two of the nuns. The condition of affairs in the convent was soon made public, and the two zealous priests deemed it proper to report to the Judge and Civil Lieutenant of the village. As soon as they reached the convent, they were informed by Barré, the Exorcist, that he had driven the demons out of the Superior and one of the Sisters, and that one was named *Astaroth*, and the other *Sabulon*. It seems, however, that the exorcism wasn't very efficient, as the Superior was seized with convulsions at this visit. The sorcerer, charged with the foul work, was Urbain Grandier, a priest. The demon was publicly interrogated in Latin, and answers were returned in the same tongue*,—but when the demon, possessing a lay sister (who did not understand Latin), was interrogated no answer could be obtained. The Civil Lieutenant wished to know whether the possessed had any difficulty with Grandier, but the priest would not allow, what he called, "indiscreet questions."

On investigation, after leaving the convent, the civil authorities found that the *same* series of questions had previously, on several occasions, been proposed to the supposed demon who inhabited the Superior's body. They demanded that all further exorcisms should be performed in conjunction with exorcists appointed by civil authorities. Mignon simply asserted that they had not objected to the presence of the civil authorities; and Barré asserted that he

---

* The following queries and answers are said to have been made by the exorcist and given by the demon, possessing the Superior. Q. Propter quam causam ingressus es in corpus hujus virginis? A. Causâ animositatis. Q. Per quod pactum? A. Per flores. Q. Quales? A. Rosas. Q. Quis misit? A. Urbanus. Q. Dic cognomen? A. Grandier. Q. Dic qualitatem? A. Sacerdos. Q. Cujus ecclesiæ? A. Sancti Petri. Q. Quae persona attulit flores? A. Diabolica.

had discovered, instead of one devil, *Astaroth*, tormenting the Superior, there were really seven, whose names he glibly recited. The history of the *pacte* was as follows: "Urbain Grandier had delivered it, in the form of a bouquet of roses, to a certain Jean Pivart—a magician of an inferior order—; this Pivart gave it to a young girl, who had thrown it over the garden wall into the convent." The authorities demanded that they should be allowed to see the possessed. But the energumens exhibited *then* neither contortion nor grimace, and chanted quietly, along with the other sisters, during the celebration of the mass. On another occasion, however, the Superior was seized with convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and the demon, when asked at what time he would leave her, answered, *cras mane*. He resisted the litanies and even the power of the holy ciborium, when placed on the head of the possessed. Shortly after the Superior regained her natural condition and, smiling, said to Barré: *Il n'y a plus de Satan en moi*. A circumstance is related here that was very common in demonopathia, the Superior, freed from this crisis, neither recollected the questions or answers. She pretended that at ten o'clock at night her hand had been seized and pricked, and that immediately afterwards she discovered three spines in it.

A cat being found in the chamber, it was declared to be the demon, but the cat proved to be an old attaché of the convent. A large bouquet of white roses was gathered in the garden, and was thrown into the fire by Barré with the hope of eliciting some preternatural phenomena, but they only burned in the natural way. Barré, however, pledged his faith as an exorcist that he would compel the devil to leave or to make manifest, in a most indubitable manner, the possession of the Ursulines.

Let us see, for the clear understanding of this curious event in history, who was Urbain Grandier. He had been a student with the Jesuits at Bordeaux, afterwards *curé* of the church of St. Peter at Loudun, and a prebend in the chapter of Sainte-Croix at the same place. This possess-

ion of two benefices irritated his brethren,—and, moreover, he was a good preacher, an easy and elegant writer, and a gallant, attractive gentleman. Charges had been brought against him involving his moral character in the most absolute way. A large number of persons figured as his accusers, although they did not appear against him on trial. He was condemned to fast on bread and water for three months, interdicted *a divinis* for five years in the diocese of Poitier, and forever in the city of Loudun. Having appealed to the parliament of Paris, the whole affair was entrusted to the *Presidial* of Poitiers. Here the sentence was reversed, and the archbishop of Bordeaux absolved him from the ecclesiastical penalty. Grandier used his triumph so as to annoy his enemies as much as possible, re-entered the city shaking a laurel branch as a token of his victory. His fame having penetrated the convent, associated with reports of his eloquence, and beauty, contests with and victory over his enemies, without doubt was the cause of his name being suggested to the poor nuns, in the height of their hysterical attacks, as the cause of the same.

But to proceed with our epitome of this history,—Grandier demanded that the nuns be examined separately and by approved exorcists, who were at least not his open enemies. However, the exorcisms were carried on in church by the same Barré. The possessed always answered in Latin, indicative of bad grammatical training, and full of solecisms. In every case, the name of Grandier was mentioned as the magician. A series of contradictions having been from time to time detected in the communications of the quasi-possessed, the archbishop of Bordeaux sent his own physician to examine into the matter, but nothing being discovered by him, the prelate forbade the pretended exorcists from hereafter practising the art, and assigned its practice to two priests. No more indications being found, in the convent, of demonopathia, Grandier was again triumphant.

Such triumph could not last long, especially in an age when the really mysterious was being overlooked in the

Church, and mankind was on the alert for something that should claim its wonder. Despite the contradictory and improbable character of the testimony, he was at length condemned to death. The only proof was that arising from a persistance, on the part of the accused, in their accusation. Grandier was finally burned at the stake. His last words were: "Deus, Deus, ad te vigilo, miserere mei, Deus! While the priest Lactance was lighting the fire, Grandier said—there is a God in heaven, who will be both thy judge and mine,—I summons thee to appear before him in one month. It is a singular fact, that Lactance died exactly one month from the death of Grandier, in frightful convulsions, as though he had been possessed of all the demons that he had been pursuing.

The death of Grandier did not diminish the troubles in the nunnery. We sicken as we read the details of incidents, connected with demonopathia among these females, who had separated themselves from the world with the view of serving God, but who, on the contrary, were contributing to the support of the worst passions and feelings of their fellow men, by enabling them to denounce any troublesome person as a magician. "The mortal blow to the whole, was the withdrawal of the pension of four thousand livres per month, which the king had allowed for the support of the exorcists and the nuns. Richelieu began to believe that if it were continued longer, the farce would only serve to exhibit the injustice of the condemnation of Grandier; * * his own death (Dec. 18, 1638) was the signal of the definitive flight of all the inferior demons that still swarmed about Loudun." The nuns, nevertheless, were the recipients of distinguished honors. "Jeanne de Belfiel—the mother superior—one of the principal actresses in the troop, was the object of the greatest favors. Presented at Court, she was complimented by the King and Queen, and honored by the benediction of the cardinal-minister, * * she lived for years, surrounded with an aureola of sanctity, and wanted nothing to prevent her canonization after death."

Can modern science aid us in comprehending this curious episode in the history of the seventeenth century? Esquirol considers all the phenomena, exhibited by the nuns, as symptoms of what he styles *demonomania;* Bertrand claims that they were only phenomena of extacy. Figuier puts the whole matter very forcibly before his readers, as follows; "The convulsions proceeded from hysteria, The disease was perfectly marked in three of them. We believe that it existed *a priori* in the convent, and that it caused the first convulsive and contagious symptoms, through imitation. But this affection, the nervous system being constantly irritated, gives rise to such a physiological condition, that every physical or moral excitement would bring this system into play, provoking disorders and extraordinary cries from the sick person. Indeed young hysterical girls are now considered marvellous *subjects* for magnetizers. The hysterical nuns thus became pliant tools, in their fits of somnambulism, in the hands of the zealous exorcists." They were to a certain extent moved at the suggestion of the latter, to adopt any ideas which might be presented. The name of Grandier had been associated with every thing calculated to bewilder and charm the young, for he had beauty, talent, wit and reputation. It was an easy matter to make one, who had allowed her mind to dwell upon him, to believe that he was the cause of the convulsions to which she was subject. Imitation would soon place others in the same position. The general belief in magic easily induced them to charge this, upon the gay and handsome young priest. These were the days, our readers will recollect, when ugly, old women were put out of the way, by first being charged with witchcraft and sorcery, and dashing youths were disposed of under the plea that they were magicians. The old proverb reminds us that "to give a dog a bad name is the sure method of destroying him," and we know that even a dog may be scared to death when a tin-pan is tied to his tail. We can destroy a man, either by exciting the public against him, or by so wounding his own sensibility that he shall shun the public eye.

With the above mentioned causes inducing the belief that they were under some influence of Grandier, it is easy to perceive how the nuns would feign demoniacal possession. The latter gave them notoriety,—brought them prominently before the community. This notoriety was too dear not be preserved at any price. Thus, the first wrong step having been taken, the path was comparatively an easy one through deceit, and lies innumerable. The devils of Loudun would be exorcized now, *not* by ecclesiastical butby medical treatment, and their history would be a very short one.

The fall of the Jansenists in 1720 had been accomplished, after protracted and vigorous efforts on the part of the Jesuits. The propositions of Quesnel had been the cause of much dissension, and ecclesiastic quarrels had become a disgrace to the Church. At this time of defeat and overthrow of the Jansenists, they began to exhibit miraculous phenomena as a "protest against their overthrow and with the view of showing the world, that Providence did not approve of the judgments pronounced on their cause by men." Shortly before this period, James II, of England, found his greatest consolation in exile, at Saint Germain, in *touching* those afflicted with scrofula. The king's touch was supposed to be endowed with miraculous healing properties. After his death, the Jesuit fathers claimed for his tomb still more wonderful properties. "The sainted monarch, says Salgues, did not confine himself to curing the King's evil; he made the lame to walk, gave suppleness to the limbs of the gouty, corrected defective vision and untied the tongues of stammerers and mutes."

It was necessary that the Jansenists should show some signs as wonderful as those exhibited at the monarch's grave. Vialart, archbishop of Châlons sur Marne, had exhibited great piety conjoined with gentle tolerance during his life, had opposed the persecution of protestants, and the stigma thrown on the character of Jansenius by the charge of heresy. At his grave, rheumatisms, diseases of the skin and ulcers were relieved almost instantly. Investigations being had, the following results were announc-

ed by the examining physicians in the case of thirty four miracles reported,—twenty two were explainable from causes purely physical, eleven were probably supernatural, and one necessarily so.

But the reputation of these was overshadowed by that of the Abbe Francis of Paris, more familiarly known as Deacon Paris. He had lived a life of extreme religious mortification, which was terminated by death, May 1, 1727. His remains were interred in the cemetery of Saint Medard, and the grave became the scene of some of the most astonishing performances ever executed by religious fanaticism. The first cure was alleged to have been performed in the case of an old-clothes-man, Pierre Lero, who had been suffering from indolent ulcers on his left leg, which had resisted all the treatment of his barber-surgeon Tanson. He was carried to the grave, gave twelve sous to a good woman to perform a *neuvaine* (nine days devotion) for him, twelve to a sacristan to have a mass said. In addition he obtained a piece of the bed of the deacon which he applied to the leg and *kept himself quiet.* On the tenth day, he was cured and the cure was considered a miracle performed by deacon Paris. This case was followed up by the cure of Marie Jeanne Orget, who for thirty years had been treated by physicians and surgeons for erysipelas. Being carried to the cemetery, she prayed the saint that she might not only be cured, but be supplied with strength to work for her support (she was then 57 years old). The relief was immediate, and she was able to leave the cemetery without assistance. It is true, that the recovery of this woman was seriously doubted by the Jesuit fathers, and that she had said nothing about the cause of it until obliged by her Jansenist confessor, still at her last moments she repeated her belief in the presence of the notaries.

These quasi miracles were nothing to what followed, when a tomb was erected over the remains of the deacon, around which were to be exhibited those wonderful convulsions and transports of prophetic delirium, which attracted the attention of all France and made the account of

the "*Convulsionnaires Jansenistes*," occupy a curious place in the history of the last century. After the erection of the tomb, the miracles, asserted to be effected by the efficacy of the saint, increased. A girl afflicted with paralysis was cured, and other cases followed so rapidly, that Montgeron, published in three large quarto volumes, an account of the miracles operated through the intercession of the deacon. "The cemetery of Saint Medard, although all the soil and stones contained therein partook of the efficacy of the ashes of the deacon, became a theatre too small for the expansive nature of the work to be performed. It extended to other churches and cemeteries." The Jesuits availed themselves of the power of the government, and soon the Jansenists obtained the benefits which accrue from a vindictive persecution.

Now began the famous convulsive movements, which always accompanied the cures of those who resorted to the mortuary shrine of the Abbe Francis of Paris. Our limits warn us that we can only furnish an account of one case, but *ex uno disce omnes*. We cite the case of Marie-Anne Vassereau, who was laboring under a frightful aggregation of infirmities: swelling of the legs, resulting from badly treated small pox, paralysis, lachrymal fistula, caries of the nasal bones &c., &c. "At first, the spirit of the saint made no remarkable demonstration. But as she heard mass, Dec. 1, 1731, her body was seized with tremblings; she entered the cemetery and the tremblings increased; she approached the tomb and they became convulsions. On the next day the spirit of the saint acted still more strongly. Her head became confused,—her legs, arms and thighs were extraordinarily agitated. She lost consciousness, but, being carried in the charnel-house (*charniers*) and restoratives being applied, she recovered. She returned home, but the convulsions attained such a character then, that the domestics and neighbors were required to hold her limbs. The convulsive movements accompanied her when she walked out, so that passersby were obliged to prevent her from breaking her head or throwing herself in the river. The

days following exhibited similar scenes. She attained curious notoriety in the Faubourg of Saint-Jacques, and nothing was spoken of, save the convulsions of Marie-Anne Vassereau. Her nurses were deprived of all rest; she fell in the pews, in the kitchen and wherever she went." Finally the relief came———. The denoument arrives, somewhat after the *ridiculus-mus*-order of the poet.

"These convulsions were the signal that lighted up a new dance of Saint-Guy, resuscitated in Paris in the eighteenth century, with infinite variations, some more lugubrious or buffoon-like than others. From all quarters of the city they ran to the cemetery of Saint-Medard, to participate in the shiverings, or *crispations*, and tremblings. Sick or not, each pretended to fall into convulsions, and had his own style of convulsions. It was a true tarentula-dance. * * The soil of the cemetery and the adjoining streets was an arena of contention for a multitude of girls, women and invalids of all ages, who zealously contended in convulsions. Men on the ground struggled in real epilepsy, and some swallowed pebbles, bits of glass and even live coals." The most indecent and filthy exhibitions were made by both sexes, and, in the name of religion, things were perpetrated which would not have been tolerated in the Saturnalia of pagan Rome. Certain of the *convulsionnaires* assumed positions representing some religious mysteries, selecting especially scenes from the Passion. "In the midst of all this, nothing was heard but groaning, singing, howling, hissing, declaiming, prophecying, and caterwauling. But what predominated in this convulsionary epidemic was the dance. The chorus was conducted by Abbe Bècherand, an ecclesiastic, who stood, so that every one could see him, on the tomb of the saint. There he daily executed, with a skill above all rivalry, his favorite *pas*, the famous saut de carpe (somer sault), which the spectators never tired of admiring. The Abbe himself belonged to the number of those who had undergone the curative convulsions. One of his legs was fourteen inches shorter than the other,—a defect however which did not interfere

with his favorite dance. He declared that the leg was lengthened, every three months, one line."

"On the twenty seventh of January 1732 the cemetery was closed and the entrance walled up by order of the king." A distinguished, Jansenist lawyer, named Carré de Montgeron, going to the king to present the book he had written to demonstrate the truth of the miracles, was brutally arrested and thrown into prison, where he died after seventeen years imprisonment. The *convulsionnaires* were now treated with the greatest rigor, and, of course, thrived under it amazingly. Although tracked from street to street, driven from *quartier* to *quartier*, they increased in numbers. The chevalier Folard, distinguished for his contributions to military writings, was soon affiliated with them. His religion was nothing. Curious to observe the operations at Saint-Medard, he went to the cemetery. There, wounds received in war were cured, and seven days afterwards he was attacked with convulsions. He renounced all his honors and expectations, and made the rest of his life a series of convulsions, associating only with those who frequented the houses of *convulsionnaires*, or spending his time in prayer and reading books of devotion.

The cemetery being closed, a new phase was assumed by this religious mania. Patients submitted their bodies to blows from hammers and bars of iron, to cuts with knives, upon the breast, abdomen, hips, and thighs; and the victims, instead of complaining, expressed their joy. The convulsionnaires believed themselves specially set apart for the general work of edification, and with the view of accomplishing this, in the best possible manner, adopted the brutal maltreatment of their bodies, and those of their followers. They called the inhuman violences, to which they were subjected, *secours*. These were known either as *petits secours*, consisting in blows with the fist and small sticks of wood, stampings and other similar operations,—and *les grand secours* or *secours meurtriers* which were of a more terrible character. They pretended that all this was re-

quired to aid in the restoration of a corrupt and gangrened church.*

In 1741 the excitement seemed to have ceased in Paris, but in fact the convulsionnaires still existed, and eighteen years later, it was found the epidemic was raging in all its force. We are indebted to a report of La Condamine for an account of one of their exhibitions April 13, 1759, to which he had gained admission by a subterfuge. A number of males and females had collected together in a chamber at Marais. Sister Francoise, the deanness of the convulsionnaires, was first beaten, on all parts of the body, with a bundle of chains weighing 8 to 10 pounds, by two men. This was followed by blows with sticks of wood, and being placed on her back on the ground the director walked over her several times. This woman was then *nailed* to a cross, and allowed to remain there for thee hours and a half. At the same time, a young proselyte, Sister Marie, was nailed to another cross and allowed to remain attached to it for half an hour. La Condamine remarks that "only girls and women have submitted to this cruel operation. Those who recognize in all this a good work, assert as a proof of the miracle that the victims do not suffer, and that on the contrary their torments are agreeable. This would be, indeed, a great prodigy. But I saw them give indications of the keenest anguish, and the only astonishing feature to which I can testify is the constancy and courage that fanaticism was able to inspire." The performances of the Hindoo devotees are not more sickening in their details than these ;—the deluded worshipper at the shrine of Juggernaut does not resort to more horrible tortures than the convulsionnaires willingly exposed themselves to, in the name of Him who claims worship from the heart, and who

* Elle est couchè dans l'ordure et dans la poussière, s'écriait une convulsionnaire, les vers lui rongent la chair, la pourriture s'est mise jusque dans ses os, une odeur insupportable s'exhale sans cesse de la corruption qui l'enveloppe. Venez donc à sons secours, appliquez-y le fer et le feu, n'épargnez rien pour la guérir, coupez, tranchez, brñlez : il lui faut les remèdes les plus violents."

Dom. Lataste, *Lettres Theologiques*. Quoted by Figuier.

exhibits to his disciples the example of the publican, with his penitent cry for pardon, as that of one who "went down to his house justified" rather than the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men.

With the close of 1760 Paris was freed from this terrible form of religious mania, although the end was not then of the miraculous cures attributed to the deacon Paris. With our knowledge of the years required to uproot a superstition from the hearts of the people, we may not be surprized to learn, that instances of miracles worked in the name of the deceased deacon are recorded as late as 1787,—and it may be that our own enlightened age has witnessed similar instances of delusion. Error is hydra-headed,—the removal of one head seems to give that stimulus which, in time, will cause another to shoot forth in fullest vigor.

Figuier attempts an explanation of the singular phenomena we have briefly laid before our readers. Two things are required in order to make such an attempt successful; careful examination, 1st of the facts, 2nd their character whether natural or miraculous. And here again, let us not be too easy with our definition of what is miraculous. In one view, all nature is a miracle past the finding-out of man,—the human body, something calculated to excite our awe as well as admiration. How wondrous the law which keeps its manifold organs in harmonious relations to each other! Why do the disturbing actions of natural causes not injure or destroy this harmony and thus bring about, that which we call, disease? And when disease is raging, who can explain how all the mysterious harmonies of health are brought to play in happy accord again? All this is a mystery,—yes, a mystery past finding out. We are still playing on the sea shore,—collecting the beautiful pebbles which the waves have cast up from the deep, but the boundless expanse of the unknown extends off into the distance. Let us learn humility and reverently bow before the Omnipotence of our Creator and Preserver. "Miracles," as has been stated by a writer in this Review (Vol. II. 578), "must themselves be authenticated as genuine heaven-

ly miracles, by carrying in them proper spiritual contents, and by being surrounded with proper spiritual connections and relations. They are of force, not abstractly and on the outside of the revelation or mission they are employed to prove, but concretely and in living union with this, as part and parcel of the whole." Judged by such a norm as this, all these miracles are dissipated as the morning clouds before the light of the sun. But we can afford to examine these epidemic convulsions more closely, so as to get at their physiological cause.

In examining the facts connected with the convulsionary epidemic, we must admit that cures were had of some of the numerous sick who crowded around the deacon's tomb. But these were very few indeed,—only fifteen or sixteen among the large number of devotees, whose exercises are narrated by Carré de Montgeron. These, however, are of such a character, that we do not require resort to the supposition of a miracle to explain them. The only argument in favor of any connection between the cures and the visits to Saint-Mèdard, is that those occurred after the visit had been made and a *neuvaine* performed. The validity of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* argument has been exploded long since. Still *this* argument cannot be adduced, "since the cures took place very arbitrarily, sometimes before, sometimes during and often even very long after the worship paid to the saint." No desperate cases were in fact ever brought to the notice of the saint, and some of the so-called cures proved to be deceptive as the relapses indicated. These induce us to believe that the diseases were often feigned. And some of the convulsions were voluntary imitations of those witnessed in the cemetery, as was acknowledged afterwards.

Among the convulsionnaires there were some epileptics, —and involuntary imitation caused the semblance of this disease in some which may finally have really become the disease itself. Watson, in his Practice of Medicine, quotes the following from Baglivi. Vidimus, anno 1670, in Dalmatiâ juvenem gravissimis correptum convulsionibus, prop-

terea quod inspexerat solummodo alium juvenem dum epilepsiâ humi contorquebatur: and states that "there is no *spectacle* of horror so efficacious in producing a fit of epilepsy in others, as that of a person suffering under epilepsy." The symptoms, generally presented by these fanatics, were simply due to a species of nervous affection, which was either St. Vitus' dance, epilepsy or hysteria,—and the latter was probably the principal cause. The curative means recognized as proper for the latter were generally efficient. Occasionally the adoption of purely moral treatment proved sufficient. At one time there was a suicidal epidemic in Milet, among the girls, and the town feared depopulation. It was checked by a decree, that the ~~every~~ several body of a girl who hung herself should be exposed naked in public, and then be dragged by a cord around the neck on a hurdle. The decree cured the disease.

Boerhaave's cases at the Harlem hospital are known to medical men. All the female patients in one of the wards fell into convulsions in imitation of one naturally so affected. He brought into the ward, a chafing dish full of live coals, and proceeded to heat a steel instrument red hot, announcing that he would burn the first patient who would have a convulsion. The result was—the disappearance of the disease.

A word or two as to the cause of toleration of painful blows and cuts, which were altogether disproportionate to the feeble strength of those receiving them. "The power of resistance and the condition of insensibility seem to arise from the extreme changes in sensibility, which the exaltation of any passion will produce in the animal economy. Rage, fear, in a word, any passion, having reached its climax, can produce such insensibility. * * Moral excitement often extinguishes all sensibility. Soldiers with fatal wounds, have continued to fight, without suspecting their presence, until they have fallen dead. * * In Italy a fanatic having crucified himself his physician reports, that he suffered nothing from his wounds duri the religious delirium, although he experienced horrible sufferings when

reason had returned." From all the foregoing it will be readily concluded, with our author, that there was nothing in the convulsions and extacies of the Saint-Médard cemetery, which is inexplicable by the laws of medicine, physiology or psychology.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the spirit of persecution, evinced by the Romanists, excited a species of religious fervor among the Protestants, which manifested itself in erratic acts that entitle the "Protestant Prophets" to a notice in our retrospective of the marvellous in Modern Times. Louis XIV, in the midst of his debauches, was sometimes visited by compunctions of conscience and dreams of future punishment. His spiritual advisers suggested that he could ensure his own salvation by securing proselytes from the heretical reformers to the ranks of the Roman Church,—and that the best way of accomplishing this was by means of money,—purchasing the poor. Under the direction of Cardinal Le Camus, this important business of bribery for religious purposes was carried on by Pellisson, an apostate Calvinist. Among the poor classes of Huguenots this plan, it is asserted, had some success. The medium price allowed did not exceed a crown of six livres. The additions to the list of converts were shown to the king, every quarter, and the courtier, Pellisson, endeavored to make the monarch believe that the whole world would yield either to his might or his benevolence. The king became more anxious to increase the church, and adopted every cruel plan suggested by the bigoted Romanists; in 1680 twenty Protestant churches were destroyed in Vivarais. Children were allowed to abjure their religion at seven years of age; and many were taken away from their parents in the provinces, simply because they had learned the *Ave Maria* from the servants, which was an evidence of their desire to abjure Protestantism. This act, so similar to that of the Mortara boy in Italy, which created so much excitement a few years since, was in violation of all the protection guarranteed by the Edict of Nantes. It was only the signal for persecutions in a thousand forms

each more ingenious than its predecessor. A regular system of compulsory retraction was established under the agency of Louvois, the minister. Bribes were changed for force. A dragoonade of the country, beginning at Bearn—the birth-place of Henry of Navarre, was adopted and soldiers were employed as the missionaries of a religion professing to breathe peace and goodwill. Voltaire* thus speaks of the manner this dragoonade was begun: "An archbishop, an intendant, a pastor, or some one with authority marched at the head of the soldiers. The principal Calvinistic families, especially those considered most pliable, were assembled. These renounced their religion in the name of the others: the obstinate were delivered over to the soldiers, who were allowed to do any thing with them but take their lives. Notwithstanding this, some were so cruelly treated that they died."

Louis XIV, thinking to free his kingdom at once from heretics revoked the Edict of Nantes, October 22, 1685. The Chancellor Le Tellier signed the fatal measure, crying out with hideous joy, "nunc dimittis servum tuum &c." Bossuet expended his eloquence in a funeral oration on Le Tellier, prostituting it thus in a most disreputable manner. The Revocation caused a general migration. Fifteen hundred ministers left the country! "Holding the Bible in one hand and their walking staves in the other, they set out for the different frontiers of the kingdom." These were followed by their people, when the laws and ordinances of the king had become insupportable. For a Protestant to live in France at this period was a continuous martyrdom. "He could neither marry nor make a will; his children were considered bastards." All the liberal professions and municipal offices were interdicted. He was allowed only to be a laborer, mechanic or shepherd. Religious worship was prohibited. Death was the punishment for an Evangelical minister who remained in France; death for every one engaged in Protestant worship, or caught in a worshipping assembly.

---

* Essai sur l'histoire genérale.

This series of cruelties was established by the much bepraised Louis Quatorze,—"the most magnificent of the Bourbon kings." At length, the Calvinist peasants took arms and a religious war was the result, During this war the phenomena now to be noticed occurred. The pastors had said to their flocks, before leaving them, "Fear not: although we shall not be with you, the Spirit of the Lord will not desert you; He will not cease to be in the midst of your assemblies,—He will speak through the mouths of women and children." These words were literally received. Deprived of their churches, they assembled in the woods and mountain-fastnesses. Their preachers braved death to be with them. A religious zeal had been fostered by cruel persecution until a species of fanaticism, purely epidemic in its consequences, seized those who were thus hunted down under the ban of law. "The mountains and desert-places were peopled with phantoms for them, and resounded with revealed words." At Geneva, a school of prophecy was established, and Du Serre, a glassblower who had been ennobled, was there ordained prophet. He established a similar school, in 1689, in Dauphiny. Children were instructed in this school, by a regimen calculated to excite their imaginations in a morbid way, by long fastings, long sermons and the perusal of the Apocalypse. They soon acquired the power of entering an extatic condition, assuming singular positions. These were sent forth and constituted one party of the protestant Prophets.

But, in the neighborhood of Castres, in 1686, demonstrations were also shown of the same spirit. Indeed we may see that this epidemic broke out in many different places, at about the same time. The same persecution followed the Protestants all over France;—they were subject to want and distress every where;—the same intense religious feeling existed with them all,—and the results were alike. A little shepherdess, 10 ten years of age, asserted that an angel appeared to her and forbade her to attend mass. This was soon noised abroad. The little spark speedily became a large fire. While a famous preacher, Cor-

bière was preaching, the assembly was surrounded and dispersed. The preacher being pursued described a circle around himself, and crying out, "Get thee behind me, Satan," the troop was so horrified that they were about retreating when their captain killed him with a pistol.

Two of these prophets deserve special notice. Isabeau Vincent and Gabriel Astier. The first known as La belle Isabeau was the daughter of a wool-carder at Saou, in the diocese of Dié. Being forced to leave her home, her godfather gave her an asylum, and the occupation of guarding his sheep. While engaged here, it is supposed, that one of the prophets, ordained by Du Serre, met her and that she became impressed with her mission. Commencing in obscure houses, her fame soon spread through Dauphiny. A young lawyer, Gerlan, became attached to her and followed her to the various assemblies, where she prophesied. The notes of her prophetic speeches are given in full, in the writers of this period. On his first visit, he describes her as "a young girl of small stature, irregular countenance, thin and browned by the wind, with a large forehead, large gentle black eyes." At times she was not able to speak, and she would pray God to loose her tongue, so that she could speak to his people. Gerlan says, she spoke like an angel. At times she fell into so profound a lethargy that violent measures could not waken her to consciousness. In this condition, she would chant the psalms in a clear and intelligible voice. Afterwards she would improvise prayers, recite long passages from the Scriptures, denounce the papists, and preach with considerable force. After the extacy had passed by, she did not recollect any thing that occurred.

The reputation of La belle Isabeau was increased by the frequency of these lethargic states. Important conversions were made by her. Among the aristocracy of Dauphiny, Madame de Baix may be mentioned. She became also inspired, and communicated her inspiration to her daughter. Madame de Baix was obliged to leave the province. She retired to a house on the left bank of the Rhone.

Here more than three hundred, who heard her, were seized with the same spirit of prophecy. Isabeau being seized by the Intendant, told the judges, who threatened her with punishment: "You may kill me; but God will raise up other prophetesses who will speak better things than I."

She was confined in a hospital, where the aristocracy contended for the honor of instructing, caring for and amusing her. But the confinement of La belle Isabeau was not ended by death, but by marriage with a gentleman of the region and—her preaching ceased.

Gabriel Astier was one of the disciples of Du Serre. He communicated to his parents and sisters first the information, that the Spirit had been given him. He was obliged soon to fly from home, and after passing from place to place, he selected the Vivarais. Numerous proselytes were made on the road, who followed him to the mountains where the spirit of the Vaudois and Waldenses had left indelible traces. He was said to have been a most extraordinary orator, at a time when much pulpit oratory was known. Figuier says "it seemed as though in all these towns (Saint-Cierge, Pranles, Saint-Sauveur, Tauzuc, Saint-Michel, &c., &c.), there was no other care, no other want, but to hear the voice of the man whom they regarded as a messenger from God. The villages were too small to contain all who came to hear Gabriel, and it was necessary to hold religious assemblies in the open country, in spite of winds and snows." To these, all ages, sexes and conditions came; in many instances, they remained days from home, following the prophet from mountain to mountain, subsisting simply on apples and nuts.

William of Orange had been placed on the British throne, and the French Protestants looked for relief from him. Gabriel announced the day on which the Prince of Orange might be expected to arrive in France, with an army of a hundred thousand men, as the exterminating angel of the Roman Church The houses of worship of the Catholics would then be demolished, and a star falling on Rome would consum the pontifical chair. It is remarkable amid

all this excitement, and the whirlwind of enthusiasm by which Astier was surrrounded, that he *never* counselled violence. He and many prophets of this period, "were content with preaching obedience to God *rather than* to the king,—assuring their hearers that the faithful had nothing to fear, for God would sustain and preserve them from the sabres and balls of the enemy." And this faith and trust in God seem to have been existing in all their followers. The Protestants were hunted down in all directions. Gabriel had been in forty combats, but was finally taken at Montpellier and condemned to be broken alive on the wheel,—a punishment to which he submitted bravely, April 2, 1690.

Vivens was another of the prophets. He was distinguished for his stout and healthy body, intrepid and adventurous spirit, and true courage. Induced to believe that the day of redress for the persecuted Protestants was at hand, he returned to France from Holland in 1689. He counselled resistance; occupied himself with collecting arms, and fabricating powder and balls. He organized the first insurrection of Cevennes putting himself at the head of four hundred armed men. These were nearly all killed or taken prisoners at the first engagement. Vivens escaped, and retiring to a cavern, was kept advised of the movements of his brethren. Here he was joined by Brousson, who was actuated with the same hopes, but who did not think of their realization by violent means. Brousson had been the protestant advocate, and was then an evangelical minister, who considered it as his duty to preach and even to die for his religion, but not to push disobedience to the king to the point of revolt. He believed that he had a mission to perform, but his unchanging sweetness he and deep aversion to violent measures made him a character pleasant to contemplate even at the present day. Brousson was ordained a minister by Vivens, who had received ordination in Holland. "B. preached regularly three times a day; attended to baptisms, marriages and deaths—all ceremonies equally sad in those times; dictated forms of

prayers, pious manuals to be used by churches, who had no pastors." His life was spent in teaching rustic and almost savage hearers, the gentlest notes of gospel truth, lying at night on the ground or a bed of dry leaves. Stealthily creeping out of houses, to avoid searching parties, he was obliged often to take shelter in the wells, or on the roofs. At length he was arrested and condemned to death for complicity in Vivens' plans to introduce a foreign army into France, and the sentence was executed at Montpellier on the same day. Vivens was killed in a cavern by an apostate Jourdan, who shot him from behind. His body was afterwards burned, and in the flames his face seemed to threaten his executioners.

The enthusiasm, which had been so excessive, was somewhat restrained by the deaths of the prominent prophets, the general slaughter of the people, and the peace of Ryswick. In 1700 a maiden lady carried the prophetic spirit to the Cévennes. She communicated the spirit to a few, and these to others, until the prophets had become thousands. Women and children were peculiarly seized. Eight thousand were said to be affected this way in the Cévennes and lower Languedoc. A commission of physicians was assembled to examine a number of these children, who had been imprisoned at Uzes. The commission did nothing but call the children fanatics, and expressed their wonder at seeing illiterate children quoting Holy Scripture most appropriately. Such an examination only increased the furor. Catholic children were seized with it and made "revelations most compromising to their Church. Their extacies were not checked by menaces or punishment from their parents, * * who delivered the poor little creatures to the exorcisms of the curés. No old Catholic was persecuted on this account; but the converts received orders to prevent their children from becoming fanatics." The accounts laid down by authors of the period are most incredible, because they refer to children from fifteen months to three years of age, who were said to preach amendment of life to those around. Those who were sent to prevent them prophesying were often seized in the same way.

The inspiration then became communicated to families. Along with the gift of speech, that of second sight was said to be possessed by some. This was shown in predictions as to impending disasters, and directions as to the proper mode of avoiding them. There was one thing to be said of these prophets, which we were not able to affirm of the "possessed" of Loudun, or the "convulsionnaires" of Saint-Medard,—"those who professed to have received the graces, immediately gave up all kinds of libertinage and vanity. Some who had been debauchees became sedate and pious."

The increase of the prophets increased the meetings. These became more numerous; daily and nightly they were held, despite the prohibition of laws. Some of the prophets began to labor under the strangest delusions. Daniel Raoul pretended that he was animated with the spirit of the prophet Daniel. He was sentenced to be broken on the wheel, and marched to the scene of his death, acknowledging Christ as his Saviour, and denouncing, as idolatry, the practices of the Roman Church. Persecution could not diminish numbers, although it was pushed to the extreme. At Creux de Vaie so great was the massacre committed that, in addition to the killed, a bark and two wagons were filled with the wounded and sent to Montpellier. A prophet was among these with his four sons. He was hung, three of the sons were condemned to the gallies and the fourth died in prison.

Several women were gibbetted, because they ran about, crying "God has given us tears of blood to weep for the desolation of Jerusalem," while drops of blood trickled from their eyes and noses. Prophecies now multiplied about some great coming event, the object of which would be the reestablishment of the Protestant religion. Abraham Mazel, Solomon Coudere and Pierre Séguier, the great prophets of the mountains, began to predict that certain persons were destined to chastise the enemies of truth. These predictions and the increasing cruelty of the Catholic priests, brought on at last the general insurrection of the

Cevennes. The abbe Du Chayla figures with bloody notoriety among his co-religionists. An attack was made on his chateau, under the direction of Esprit Séguier—*le terrible prophète*, by fifty three men, all singing on their march one of Marot's psalms. The chateau was burned, and Du Chayla, after refusing his life on the score of renouncing his religion, was killed. Each one of the party struck a blow, crying "this for my father whom thou didst destroy at the wheel." "this for my brother sent by thee to the gallies," "this for my mother, dead of grief occasioned by your persecution" &c., &c. The bloody massacre of the archpriest and his servitors was followed by prayers, offered while kneeling around the dead bodies, and psalms.

Seguier now destroyed the crosses and all the insignia of catholicism in the churches. The torch was lighted and the whole region was exposed to the horrid devastations of a civil war. Seguier however, being seized, was burned alive, August 12, 1702. His place was soon filled by Laporte, who assumed the title of "Colonel of the children of God." He and his nephew had been soldiers in the king's army, and the military knowledge there acquired, with the extatic inspirations they claimed, gave them peculiar power. Churches were burned on all sides. Laporte Senior was killed at the head of his troop. His nephew Roland became the chief leader of the religious insurrectionists, under the title of "General of the children of God." He organized his army in five legions, properly divided. The army was singularly supplied with arms. "Their guns were unlike in form and calibre; the sabres, pikes, bayonets and swords were of all varieties." Each chief of a legion governed with absolute authority, and celebrated religious worship in his camp, baptized and performed marriage services. His commands were looked upon as orders from God. But we cannot go further in detail as to the circumstances of this religious war. It was bloody in the extreme. Each side, animated with religious fanaticism, destroyed those of the other party in the most ruthless manner. Finally a treaty was had at Nimes between Cava-

lier, the young Protestant general, and Marshall Villars, which allowed *not* the religious liberty for which they had been contending, but that Cavalier should be received as Colonel in the French army with a regiment of his men to be employed in the war on the Rhine and in Spain. Immunity for past deeds had been granted, but this was not what actuated Roland, and he rejected, with contempt, the treaty of Nimes. "You are foolish," said the bold prophet leader to the young chief, "you have forgotten that you are not the general; you have betrayed your brethren and should die with shame. You are nothing more than a vile agent of the Marshal. Go tell him, that I am determined to die sword in hand for the entire reestablishment of the Edict of Nantes." Finally Roland was calmed, and he wrote a letter to the Marshal stating the true conditions of peace. The prophet Salomon and Cavalier were the bearers of this letter,—the former declared the children of the Lord would not lay down their arms, unless free exercise of their religion was allowed them. The conference was broken up by the Marshal in a rage. Cavalier found the camp in full revolt against him. Ravanel, one of his principal officers taunted him with being a coward and a traitor. The officers cried "no peace without liberty of conconscience, and the return of our pastors, the reconstruction of our churches." The *general* was sounded, and the troops formed to start out again for the continuation of the war. Cavalier followed, begging and entreating them to change the plan, but to no purpose. The soldiers received his prayers in silence, and Ravanel with insult and sarcasm. Each drew his pistol on the other. The prophet Moise prevented the fratricidal contest. Cavalier at last bade adieu to his comrades and left them in disgrace. His history is told in few words. He became a colonel in the French army, was received at Versailles with honors, soon attached himself to the Dutch army, and finally died in the British service as a Major-general and Governor of the island of Jersey.

The brigade now under the command of Ravanel was

surprised at Marjevols and suffered the loss of two hundred men. But the close of the whole war was due to the death of Roland, by treachery. He was surprized at the Chateau of Castelnau, where he had been visiting Mlle de Cornelli, for whom he had a species of platonic love; endeavoring to escape he was killed by a ball from a carbine.

We close this portion of our article with an extract from Figuier: "Thus perished, at the age of thirty, he who had given to the Cenevole insurrection its regular organization, and had held in check, with three thousand peasants, two French Marshals and an army of sixty thousand men. Roland Laporte, General of the Children of God, says Peyrat, united the indomitable tenacity of Coligny and the useful and sombre enthusiasm of Cromwell. Being possessed of the stormy element of extacy, he made it the foundation and rule of an insurrection, which he organized, nourished, clothed, sheltered, for two years in the desert, despite the rage of men and seasons; contended with three thousand combatants, against hostile people, sixty thousand armed men, the Marshals of Louis XIV, and finally was only overcome by defection, treachery and death. What obscure man could, with such feeble means, attempt with more energy, a more gigantic effort? The insurrection, created by him, died with him; he was its intellect,—its soul. But if he was the head, Cavalier was, so to speak, the arm and the most valiant sword. Roland had not that dash (élan), that adventurous, inspired impetuosity, that rash and chivalric bravery, which, added to the charms of youth, made Cavalier the most graceful and heroic figure of the desert. Roland, of a more mature age, a more manly character, had also more solid and more perfect characteristics. By nature possessing calmness united with passion, cunning with boldness, calculation with enthusiasm. A man of intellect, rather than action, he accepted, without seeking them, the combats which were necessary, leaving to Cavalier the glory of sterile and bloody assaults. His victories inspired, as it seemed, the young lieutenant with the culpable ambition of usurping the su-

preme command. Roland preserved this, and not only did not take revenge, but selected him as his means of communication with Villars, and, even after his defection, wished to reconcile him with his brigade. Cavalier appeared indispensable to his triumph. What a deplorable recompense for human actions: faithlessness conducted Cavalier to fortune and celebrity; Roland, incorruptible, sealing his cause with his blood, only obtained an obscure martydom."*

Had Roland lived, the insurrection might have attained its much desired end. Ravanel, Castanet and some others were arrested, April 18, 1705; the two were fastened back to back and burned alive. The insurrection was practically at an end.

The general communication of the tendency to prophecy seemed to depend on some general influence, which affected the whole protestant population at the same time. This was particularly to be noticed with reference to all those who belong to the Du Serre period. The prophets became strong powers when the theocratic army was organized. The Chiefs of this army were selected in accordance with the degree they were enjoying the communication of the spirit. But after the army was disbanded, certain of the prophets repaired to London (Jean Cavalier (de Sauve), Elie Marion and Durand Fage may here be mentioned), and excited much curiosity by their convulsions and extatic crises. Elie Marion founded a school of prophecy there. He was surrounded by a phalanx, divided into twelve tribes, after the manner of the Israelites. The English, however, being uneasy about this mystical religion, expelled them from the country.

Let us look upon this religious epidemic carefully, so as to see whether physiological and psychological laws will explain the extatic illuminism, which certainly existed in so wonderful a form. In the greater number of cases, it consisted in intermittent attacks, and, in the intervals, the mental and bodily health did not appear much injured.

---

* Figuier. L'Histoire du Merveilleux. II, 389.

An attempt has been made to explain what the French call *theomanie extatique des calvinistes* by the supposition that hysteria or epilepsy were the causes. Figuier very properly thinks that neither affection will explain it, but that it was a disease sui generis. The facts seem to require such a conclusion.

The *crisis* came on as follows: after an exciting sermon, directing the mind to the persecution of the Church, the individual loosing consciousness of external objects, became a prey to high cerebral exaltation, At the end of a short time he fell to the ground, and was there seized with an epileptiform attack, the whole body was shaken and the muscles were convulsed. The convulsive agitations diminished, and then disappeared, being followed by calmness, when the individual arose and delivered his discourse, the burden of which was always the truths of the Protestant faith, the errors of Rome, and the re-establishment of their own churches. These discourses were delivered in the French of Languedoc, and began always with "*I tell thee, my child; I assure thee, my child.*" It was assumed that the Holy Spirit was really the speaker. When the discourse, was concluded, the prophet resumed his ordinary manner, rarely recollecting what he had said.

The extatic condition was sometimes excited by *insufflation* of a prophet. After he had finished his discourse, he approached the neophytes considered as fit candidates, breathed in the mouth of one and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. The novice went through the various stages, just described, and, after he had prophecied, breathed in turn in the mouth of another, and so the process went on, until all the chosen candidates were admitted. Often this condition of extatic convulsion was brought on a whole assembly, simply by an order or command from the prophet.

The incidents connected with the children attacked, show how the pliable thoughts of the young may be turned in any direction. "The sons and daughters of the Cevenese Protestants heard nothing but religious conversation, or biblical invocations destined to console them in their mis-

fortunes as persecuted religionists. Hence the same ideas and words quite naturally proceeded from the mouths of these children when they were a prey to the *crises* raging in their country." The elegant language employed was simply that which they had heard from the prophets.

During the extatic crises, they were insensible to physical pain, exhibiting a similar condition to that found among the Jansenist convulsionnaires, and already mentioned in this article.

With all this, there was an epidemic character. Catholics were some times seized, and when they obeyed—their discourses were denunciatory of the mass : their children always spoke in the language of the prophets when they were seized. Protestants who desired the extacies of their brethren were seized in the same way. Many came to scoff and went away prophets.

Hallucinations were common. "In the belief that they were invulnerable, they precipitated themselves" into the midst of the fight. They saw the most celebrated martyrs of their faith, and heard delightful concerts in the air.

From all these facts the conclusion is drawn that "this was a special epidemic disease of the nervous system. The causes producing it were evidently the long sufferings and excess of misfortune to which the Protestants of the South were exposed for a long series of years. * * Despair excited the brain, and delirium with an epileptiform affection, was added to the other ills."

Considerable similarity is found between these and the actions of the Anabaptists of the 16th century, and much analogy with those convulsions of the Saint Medard Jansenists. We cannot deny the evidence furnished us in either case,—and where mere physiological explanations can satisfy our minds as to their cause, we have no need to admit the special miraculous character which has been accorded them. Such religious epidemics may be expected whenever the Church has become so cold and lifeless, as to leave absolute latitude to all, or so intolerant as to establish persecutions. We think illustrations of what we are stating

could be found within the century now passing away. It would be a subject for astonishment, if a bird's eye view could be furnished of moral and religious epidemics, belonging to this century, but which have only differed from those referred to in this article, in degree but alas ! *not* in kind. To put this subject in its proper light would be doing a service to the age. Who will go forward in the path, so well-marked out by the author of the tract on the Anxious Bench ?

We had hoped to have noticed Figuier's article on *the divining rod*, but we must forbear. It may be that we shall take up that subject in another article. For the present we shall be content if our readers will have learned how "at different epochs almost identically the same diseases, delirium, and manifestations may occur, and how a superstitious spirit or a love of the marvellous will make haste to give them a supernatural character." The human race has always yearned for the supernatural. Says Bushnell, "Men can as well subsist in a vacuum, or on a metallic earth, attended by no vegetable or animal products, as they can stay content with mere cause and effect, and the endless cycle of nature. They may drive themselves into it, for the moment, by their speculations ; but the desert is too dry, and the air too thin—they cannot stay. Accordingly, we find that just now, when the propensities to mere naturalism are so manifold and eager, they are yet instigated in their eagerness itself by an impulse that scorns all the boundaries of mere knowledge and reason ; that is, by an appetite for things of faith, or a hope of yet fresher miracles and greater mysteries—gazing after the Boreal crown of Fourier, and the thawing out of the poles under the heat of so great felicity to come ; or watching at the gate of some third heaven to be opened by the magnetic passes, or the solemn incantations of the magic circles ; expecting an irruption of demons, in the name of science, more fantastic than even that which plagued the world in the days of Christ." A provision was made to satisfy this

desire after the supernatural in the mysteries of the Christian faith, which are to be received *as* communicated, and not to be warped to suit our own purposes. St Paul's injunction is of value now, as well as eighteen hundred years ago: Prove all things; hold fast that which is *good*.

JAN 2 1904

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 075 707 7